

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Office Action dated March 24, 2006 (U.S. Patent Office Paper No. 032006). In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due reconsideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

As outlined above, claims 12, 15 and 23-25 stand for consideration in this application, wherein claims 1-11, 13-14, 16-22 and 26 are being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, while claims 12, 15 and 23-24 are being amended to correct formal errors and to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject invention.

All amendments to the application are fully supported therein. Applicant hereby submits that no new matter is being introduced into the application through the submission of this response.

Prior Art Rejections

The First 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection

Claim 1

Claims 1-11, 13-14, 16-22 and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Masuda (US 2002/0164873). As mentioned above, claims 1-11, 13-14, 16-22 and 26 are being cancelled, and therefore this rejection is moot. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

The Second 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection

Claims 1-7, 13, 14, and 17-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Vaartstra (US 6149828). As mentioned above, claims 1-7, 13, 14, and 17-21 are being cancelled, and therefore this rejection is moot. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant thanks the Examiner for holding that claims 12, 15 and 23-25 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and

any intervening claims. Claims 12, 15 and 23-24 are being amended so as to be in independent form including all of the limitations of their respective base claims, as suggested by the Examiner. Claim 25 is not being amended since it is already in independent form. Accordingly, allowance of claim 12, 15 and 23-25 is respectfully requested.

Applicant acknowledges the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance as set forth in the Office Action. However, Applicant will point out that the reasons for allowability of the above referenced claims are not limited to the reasons for allowance as set forth in the Office Action.

Conclusion

In view of all the above, Applicant respectfully submits that certain clear and distinct differences as discussed above exist between the present invention as now claimed and the prior art references upon which the rejections in the Office Action rely. These differences are more than sufficient that the present invention as now claimed would not have been anticipated nor rendered obvious given the prior art. Rather, the present invention as a whole is distinguishable, and thereby allowable over the prior art.

Favorable reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative at the address and phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

Stanley P. Fisher
Registration Number 24,344

Juan Carlos A. Marquez
Registration Number 34,072

REED SMITH LLP
3110 Fairview Park Drive
Suite 1400
Falls Church, Virginia 22042
(703) 641-4200

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